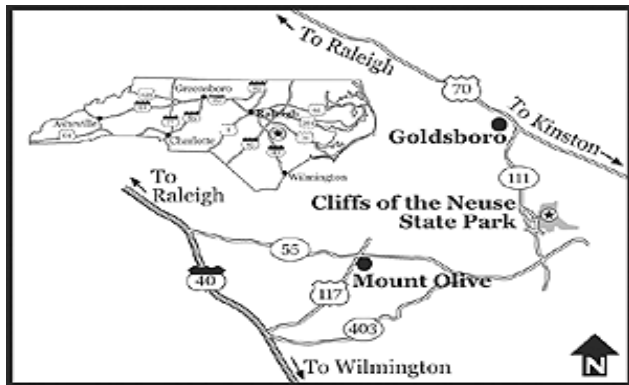


I. DESCRIPTION OF CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE STATE PARK

LOCATION AND ACCESS

Cliffs of the Neuse State Park is located in Wayne County 13 miles south of Goldsboro off N.C. 111. The park lies near the western limit of North Carolina's coastal plain. The principal access roads to the region are Interstate 95, which runs north to south about 35 miles west of the park; Interstate 40, located approximately 23 miles west of the park; U.S. 117, running north to south, passes approximately ten miles west; and U.S. 70, the main east- west highway. North Carolina Highway 111 leads from U.S.70 to the park (Figure I-1).



The park's mailing address, telephone number and email address are:

Cliffs of the Neuse State Park
345-A Park Entrance Road
Seven Springs, NC 28578

(919) 778-6234

cliffs.neuse@ncmail.net

Figure I-1. Location Map for Cliffs of the Neuse State Park

PARK LAND

Cliffs of the Neuse State Park is the only state park in Wayne County or in the surrounding six counties: Johnston, Wilson, Greene, Lenoir, Duplin and Sampson counties. Its 751 acres serves an area of North Carolina that is underserved by public outdoor recreation lands, and therefore the park serves an important role in meeting the area's outdoor recreation needs. Park acreage includes the 90-foot tall cliffs from which the park gets its name. The primary park feature, the cliffs extend for 600 yards and serve as a journal of the geological and biological history of the land. Layers of sand, clay, seashells, shale and gravel form the multicolored white, tan, yellow and brown cliff face (Figure I-2).



Figure I-2. Cliffs of the Neuse

The Neuse River, whose water's erosive action slowly carved the cliffs, winds its way through the park. A range of habitats contributes to the abundance and variety of flora in the park. River margins, flood plains, rolling uplands and ravines are home to an unusual mixture of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants. More than 420 species of plants have been recorded here.

VISITOR FACILITIES

Cliffs of the Neuse State Park offers a variety of recreational opportunities, including picnicking, camping, swimming, boating, fishing, hiking and interpretive programs. The picnic area has 40 tables, grills, and a large picnic shelter. Nearby, an 11-acre lake has a sandy beach, diving platform, bathhouse and rowboats for rent. The Neuse River offers good fishing opportunities, and four short hiking trails allow exploration of the park. A small interpretive museum depicts the geology and natural history of the area. Thirty- five tent and trailer campsites, each with a picnic table and grill but no water or electrical hookups, are available for overnight visitors. Water is available at several locations in the camping area, and a washhouse with hot showers and electricity is centrally located. A primitive camping area has also been set aside for organized groups (Figure I-3).

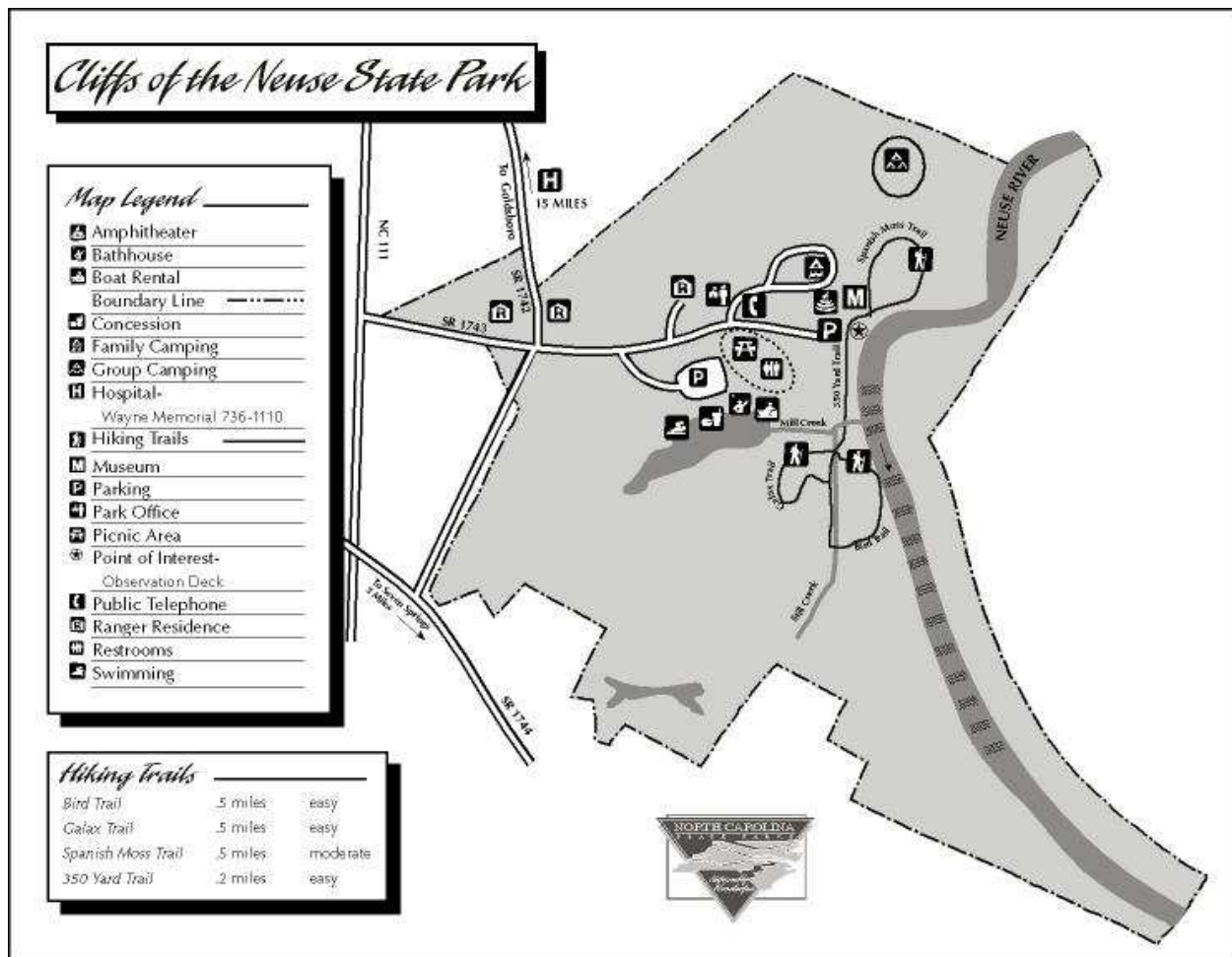


Figure I-3. Cliffs of the Neuse State Park

HISTORY OF THE PARK AREA

The Cliffs of the Neuse were formed when a fault in the earth's crust shifted millions of years ago. The Neuse River followed this fault line and, over time, cut its course through layers of sediment deposited by shallow seas that had earlier covered the coastal plain. A portion of the river took a bend against its bank and the water's erosive action slowly carved Cliffs of the Neuse, chiseling the 90- foot

high cliffs that extend for 600 yards. Layers of sand, clay, seashells, shale and gravel form the multicolored cliff face, a rainbow of white, tan, yellow and brown.

Much of the human history of the area centers on the river. The Tuscarora and Saponi Indian tribes once occupied much of the land between the Neuse and Pamlico rivers. What is now the park used to be a ceremonial ground and a gathering place for hunting expeditions, so chosen due to its proximity to a permanent watercourse and due to the high ground which provided protection from floods and offered a view of potential enemies. The river was used for travel into the surrounding wilderness. Indians farmed the sandy soil with crude stone axes, and the sandy soil was easier to farm and vegetation did not grow back as quickly as it would with rich, fertile soils.

The first surveyor in the Wayne County area was John Lawson, who recorded trading cabins and white traders in the area, generally considered Tuscarora Indian territory. Early European settlers are reported to have set up a trading center at Whitehall, the earliest English settlement in the area. Despite their likely presence, Wayne County records indicate that William Whitfield was the first permanent settler in the Whitehall community. After the Revolutionary War, a stagecoach line and river traffic promoted growth of the town. Agriculture became the primary employment, although there was a buggy factory, turpentine distillery, brick works and several warehouses in the town itself (State of North Carolina, 1977). The community of Whitehall was incorporated in 1855, and in 1881 reincorporated as White Hall, named for the plantation home of William Whitefield, who built here about 1741 (Powell, 1968).

A gateway to the Pamlico Sound and the Atlantic Ocean, the Neuse River also played a role in Civil War history. As part of an effort by the Confederate navy to challenge Union control of North Carolina's coastal waters, an ironclad ramming vessel, the CSS Neuse, was built at Whitehall (Powell, 1968), site of a Confederate shipyard. The ill-fated ship ran aground in the river and was destroyed to prevent its capture. The town itself was bombarded by Union cannons in December 1862, and the small town was virtually destroyed, never to be rebuilt or to reclaim its status as a trading center.

Wayne County residents sought to capitalize on the resort potential of natural springs along the river and early in the 20th century built two hotels in the Whitehall/ Seven Springs area, the Seven Springs Hotel and the Ninth Springs Hotel, both built by the Whitfield families (State of North Carolina, 1977). The Seven Springs resort operated from 1881 until 1944 (Powell, 1968). Whitehall became known for its mineral water cures. In an area of just a few square feet were seven springs, each said to produce water with a different chemical content. On summer weekends, visitors checked into local hotels to drink mineral water and to take riverboat excursions to the tall cliffs, a major attraction. A gallon of the water per day was prescribed for "whatever ails you."

The waters were also used for whiskey stills—locals explained that if the mineral water didn't cure people's ills, the corn whiskey would make them forget what ailed them to begin with! In fact, two federally operated liquor stills were located in the vicinity up until the early 1900s.

Whitehall development included several boat docks, a cotton gin, a supply store, a blacksmith, a boarding house, a doctor's office and several other businesses, but in the early 1920s, the community was damaged by fire and never fully recovered (State of North Carolina, 1977). As the state developed, road and rail transportation improved and river traffic became less important, and over

time only a few Whitehall businesses were rebuilt. In 1951, the town's name was changed to Seven Springs, although it had commonly been called that for many years (Powell, 1968).

Park Establishment

Local landowner Lionel Weil proposed that the cliffs area along the Neuse River be preserved as a state park and in April, 1944 offered to donate land held by him under option (State of North Carolina, 1944). The tract he proposed was known as the "Cliffs of the Neuse" and consisted of 110 acres. Although the proposed site was too small for a state park, Weil, with the assistance of others, continued to pursue the establishment of a state park in the area.

In May of the following year, 291 acres of land that included the cliffs was transferred by Lionel Weil through the Wayne Foundation, along with 30 acres from the Davis family of Mount Olive, to the State of North Carolina to establish Cliffs of the Neuse State Park (State of North Carolina, 1977). In June of 1945, the Board of Conservation and Development accepted Cliffs of the Neuse as a state park (State of North Carolina, 1946), and in July the Board approved a park advisory committee. In February of 1954, the Wayne Foundation donated another 33.78 acres to expand the park, and in August 1957, Elizabeth Rosenthall of Goldsboro donated a ten-acre tract (State of North Carolina, 1977).

A shortage of materials and labor and a lack of personnel prevented facility construction and access road improvement in time for the summer of 1946. After a ten-month search, Raymond M. Sisk was employed as a Junior Park Ranger in April of 1946, and he became the park's first employee (State of North Carolina, 1946). In 1947, an appropriation of \$57,000 was made for initial development of the park to include an entrance road and parking areas, picnic area, hiking trails and support facilities. Through 1948, the park was open but undeveloped, with picnic tables, hiking and nature study available to the public (State of North Carolina, 1948). The \$57,000 was part of a larger \$500,000 appropriation, the first state park capital improvement appropriation ever made by the General Assembly (Division of Parks and Recreation, 1988). Between 1948 and 1950, the main roads for the park were graded and paved, the picnic shelter was built, and a camping area installed (State of North Carolina, 1977). With the completion of these public use facilities, interest in the park and visitation jumped considerably from 17,322 for all of 1948 to 41,542 for the first half of 1950 (State of North Carolina, 1950). By June of 1954, a museum building, cliff overlook area, dam and lake, and a bathhouse had been completed, and an additional 33.78 acres was donated for Cliffs of the Neuse through the Wayne Foundation. Park visitation approached 80,000 (State of North Carolina, 1954).

From 1915, when the General Assembly authorized the purchase of land for the establishment of Mount Mitchell, until well beyond 1945, when Cliffs of the Neuse State Park was established, the state relied upon transfers of federal surplus lands and the generosity of its public-minded citizens to establish new state parks. North Carolina's citizens are forever indebted to these generous individuals for their contributions that have led to preservation and public use of outstanding examples of the state's natural heritage.

An important new federal outdoor recreation grants program that Congress authorized in 1965, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), provided up to a 50 percent match for acquisition and/or development of public outdoor recreation areas. The state immediately sought to use these

matching funds at Cliffs of the Neuse in order to leverage available state monies. In December of 1965, one of the first LWCF grants to North Carolina was awarded to assist in the acquisition of three parcels at Cliffs of the Neuse that totaled 56.14 acres. Acquisition of the land was needed to provide additional space to accommodate the increased number of people picnicking and camping, to buffer park facilities, and also to protect the lake's watershed. The area acquired was being used as hog pasture and further expansion of this use - which would have threatened the lake's water quality - was being considered. Soon after the first grant, a second LWCF grant to acquire an additional 74.67 acres was awarded (National Park Service).

Cliffs of the Neuse State Park receives some additional protection by virtue of receiving LWCF assistance. Lands acquired or developed with LWCF assistance may not be converted to other than public outdoor recreation use unless no other alternatives are available, and then only if replacement property of equal value and recreational usefulness is substituted.

05/04

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